

Book reviews

Human sexuality and its problems. By John Bancroft, 1983. Churchill Livingstone, Edinburgh. Pp 447. Price £12.

The apparent increasing demand for treatment of sexual disorders has resulted in the emergence of many enthusiastic but rather amateurish therapists and authors who degrade the science and art of psychosexual medicine. There are also a number of excellent research and treatment centres in this field, however, of which John Bancroft's unit is one. He is a physician, psychiatrist, and researcher who works at the Medical Research Council's reproductive biology unit in Edinburgh. His 447 page paperback is a bibliographic review of the subject. It is clearly written in a style that is easy to read, and has a wealth of references at the end of each chapter. It is basically divided into the anatomy, embryology, physiology, and biochemistry of human sexuality, patterns of behaviour in heterosexuals, homosexuals and other sexual minorities, sexual problems and their management, sexual aspects of medical practice, fertility, and finally a chapter on sexual offences. There are a number of diagrams and tables as well as a few photographs, and all are of good quality. Unfortunately the text has a fair number of spelling errors and malapropisms which I suspect crept in at editorial or printing stages. Among the many subjects dealt with by Dr Bancroft are the important work of Gebhard and Johnson in reviewing and "cleaning" Kinsey's original figures, and the changing sexuality of many cultural and ethnic subgroups including American blacks and teenagers. From the figures quoted in this book we can indirectly

conclude that at least half the male homosexuals in the United Kingdom have probably attended a sexually transmitted (STD) diseases clinic once in their lives. His chapter on homosexuality is very sound yet sensitive and also handles the moral issues involved in this subject. Mention of the original quotation about male homosexuality from Leviticus in the Bible, however, the Hebrew of which is quite explicit and unambiguous, would have completed the historical background. The section on sexuality as it applies to sexually transmitted diseases, in which the commoner problems are mentioned, is basically without error.

In this book John Bancroft takes a largely scientific stance but dismisses the metaphysical aspect of sexuality. Even the greatest philosopher of science of our times, Sir Karl Popper, acknowledges the validity of a metaphysical approach to a seemingly scientific problem. Thus purely psychoanalytical approaches to treatment are slated by Dr Bancroft although he later acknowledges he uses a form of psychotherapy to treat "blocks" in Masters and Johnson type desensitisation treatment.

Genitourinary physicians often see patients with sexual problems and should without doubt know how to assess these disorders in order to decide where best to refer the patients. This book is an excellent broad review and update on human sexuality and associated illnesses, and can be read with value by doctors, nurses, and health advisers in STD clinics who are interested in the subject and have done some background reading in sexual medicine.

D Goldmeier

A colour atlas of urology. By R W Lloyd-Davies, James G Gow, and D R Davies, 1983. Wolfe Medical Publications, London. Pp 287 and 1188 figs. Price £48.

Over the past two decades there has been a marked change in the pattern of diseases encountered in departments of genitourinary medicine. As the proportion of patients attending with the classical venereal diseases has fallen, there has been an increase in the proportion of patients with other genitourinary disorders. Urological problems are commonly encountered in clinical practice and it is essential that physicians should recognise these. This colour atlas is superbly produced and offers the reader an overview of common and not-so-common urological diseases. It is clearly aimed at surgical urologists, but genitourinary physicians will find much of interest within its covers. There is a fully illustrated account of current investigative procedures and this is followed by a systematic approach to urological disorders. There are some seventy illustrations of penile and scrotal lesions, although these are not representative of the common conditions seen in genitourinary medicine clinics.

As might be expected from the high quality of the illustrations, the price of the atlas is high and places it outwith the means of most junior doctors working in our specialty. It is a most useful book, however, and I should recommend that a copy be available in the departmental library.

A McMillan

Notices

International symposium on medical virology

The third international symposium on medical virology, sponsored by the Medical Microbiology Division, University of California, is to be held from 19 to 21 October 1983 at the Disneyland Hotel, Anaheim, California, USA. For further information, please contact: Dr Luis M de la Maza, Department of Pathology, University of California, Irvine Medical Center, 101 City Drive, Orange, California 92668, USA.

Symposium on skin and the nervous system

The third symposium on skin and the nervous system, entitled "New methods and advances in the study of skin innervation," is to be held from 24 to 29 March 1984 in Vienna, Austria. For further information, please contact: Professor W Gebhart, Department of Dermatology II, University of Vienna, Vienna Medical Academy for Postgraduate Education, Alser Strasse 4, A-1090 Vienna, Austria (tel: (0222) 42 13 83).